



News for Immediate Release

March 26, 2008

Contacts:

- Elissa Lynn, Senior Meteorologist (916) 574-2221
- Don Strickland, Information Officer (916) 653-9515
- Ted Thomas, Information Officer (916) 653-9712
- Frank Gehrke, Snow Surveys Office (916) 574-2635

Snowpack Normal, but DWR Water Deliveries Limited by Federal Court Ruling

SACRAMENTO – The 2008 winter snow survey conducted today by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) indicates that snowpack water content is near normal this year. Despite this fact, the news is not good for water deliveries. Although there has been a return to average snowpack figures, State Water Project (SWP) deliveries remain near record lows because of a federal court ruling restricting Delta pumping to help protect the threatened Delta smelt.

“The snowpack is back to normal, but a broken Delta means water deliveries to millions of Californians will be far below normal this year,” said DWR Director Lester Snow. “We must move ahead on the comprehensive plan outlined by Governor Schwarzenegger to invest in our water systems, restore the Delta and ensure clean, safe and reliable water supplies.”

The pumping reductions are a result of federal Judge Oliver Wanger’s decision in December 2007 to curtail pumping by state and federal water projects to protect the tiny fish vital to the ecosystem that has seen its population decline drastically in past years. Delta smelt populations are also adversely affected by other activities such as other water diversions, water pollution, and non-native species.

Currently, the SWP is projected to deliver only 35 percent of requested amounts this year to communities, farmers and businesses in the Bay Area, Central Valley and Southern California.

Manual snow surveys are conducted monthly from January through May to help forecast the amount of spring and summer runoff into reservoirs. The readings at this time of year are generally considered the most significant in gauging how much water is being held in the Sierra snow pack.

Meanwhile, electronic sensor readings posted on the California Data Exchange Center’s Web site show Northern Sierra snow water equivalents at 105 percent of normal for this date, Central Sierra

at 89 percent, and Southern Sierra at 103 percent. Statewide, the percentage of normal is at 97 percent. The figures last year were 53 percent for the Northern Sierra, 48 percent Central Sierra, 39 percent for Southern Sierra, and 47 percent statewide.

DWR 3/26/08 Manual Snow Survey Results

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	63.5 inches	32.6 inches	98
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	53.4 inches	27.8 inches	98
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	80.0 inches	33.0 inches	106
Tamarack Flat	6,500 feet	64.0 inches	30.4 inches	112

Importance of Snow Surveying

Snow-water content is important in determining the coming year's water supply. The measurements help hydrologists prepare water supply forecasts as well as provide others, such as hydroelectric power companies and the recreation industry, with much needed data.

Monitoring is coordinated by DWR as part of the multi-agency California Cooperative Snow Surveys Program. Surveyors from more than 50 agencies and utilities visit hundreds of snow measurement courses in California's mountains each month to gauge the amount of water in the snowpack.

The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.

Contact the DWR Public Affairs Office for more information about DWR's water activities.